



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

June 28, 2006

## **ICE arrests 22 illegal alien workers for engineering company that services Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base** *Operation tied to worksite enforcement effort involving sites with national security ties*

SAN DIEGO – Agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today arrested 22 foreign nationals employed by Burtech Pipeline, an Encinitas business that provides contract services to the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base in Oceanside.

The employees arrested during today's operation are all male Mexican nationals. Their immigration status makes it illegal for them to work in the United States. They were identified after ICE agents reviewed the hiring records of more than 180 Burtech employees. The workers were arrested at their homes. None of the employees arrested this morning has been identified as having worked at Camp Pendleton.

Of the 22 employees arrested today, two have prior narcotics convictions, including one legal permanent resident, or "green card" holder, whose criminal record renders him deportable.

Burtech Pipeline cooperated fully with the investigation, which is part of ICE's ongoing effort to target illegal workers with access to critical infrastructure worksites around the country, such as U.S. military installations, nuclear plants, airports, and seaports.

According to investigators, the majority of the company's unauthorized workers used fraudulent social security and alien registration numbers to complete the required forms to obtain their jobs. While there is no evidence that any of the employees had terrorist ties, unauthorized workers with access to security sensitive sites are potentially vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists, smugglers, traffickers, or other criminals.

"Protecting the integrity of military facilities and other critical infrastructure sites is a crucial component of our interior immigration enforcement strategy," said Julie L. Myers, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE. "Those who use fraud or false documents to gain employment mask not only their true identities, but also their motives. Moreover, they could be open to exploitation by terrorists or other criminals. ICE is shutting down this vulnerability with comprehensive initiatives, such as Operation Safe Cities in San Diego, to target illegal aliens employed at these sensitive sites and identify criminal activity by the employees or employers."

Today's arrests are part of an ongoing worksite joint investigation involving ICE and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service in conjunction with Operation Safe Cities, a local ICE initiative implemented after 9/11 to protect sensitive businesses from possible security breaches.

Since 2003, ICE agents have audited nearly 900 companies throughout San Diego County with a link to national security. Nearly 30 percent of those companies were found to have illegal workers on their payrolls. More than half of the unauthorized workers identified during these investigations have been removed from the United States.

ICE is significantly enhancing its worksite enforcement efforts as part of its interior enforcement strategy. The Administration is seeking \$41.7 million in new funding in its fiscal year 2007 budget request. The budget increase would support the hiring of an additional 171 special agents and 35 support personnel to enhance existing worksite enforcement investigations.

The budget request also provides an additional \$135 million to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) to expand the current Employer Verification pilot program to support a national electronic employment authorization verification system. The current basic pilot program is a voluntary electronic authorization program enabling an employer to confirm the employment eligibility of all newly hired workers. In a recent address to the nation, President Bush also called for the creation of a tamper-proof worker verification card as part of a comprehensive immigration reform plan.

To date, nationwide there are more than 15,000 employees linked into the Basic Pilot Program. In San Diego more than 127 businesses are now using it. Interested employers are urged to call the agency's toll-free number [888-464-4218] to obtain more information about the program.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*